FFR

ANTI-BACTERIAL

Issue № 162: As I Lay Frying: Faulkner's Fried Egg Folly

Fowl Feathered Review is a quarterly, a disordered artifact of the human impulse to categorize and consume the ephemeral. Produced by the Springwound Mammoth Pancake Coalition—an entity distinct from its waffle-centric counterpart—it is birthed under the Fowlpox Press imprint. Virgil Kay, its editor, presides over this enterprise from a paper canoe adrift on the Passagassawakeag, a river of dubious depth and even more dubious inhabitants. Surrounded by featherheads and their aquatic card games, Kay's reign is absolute, his word the final arbiter in the transformation of boastful souls into doormats. Layout and visual conceits are the province of Cookie Granola, while melodrama and histrionics fall under the purview of Childe Harold. Silent Bill, in his characteristically taciturn manner, provides necessary pauses. The review's structural integrity, or lack thereof, is the domain of Unkie Bob, whose talents extend to the mitigation of typographical errors and the prevention of electrical conflagrations. Everett Enótita serves as Kay's indispensable amanuensis, and the Ecum Secum Literary Brain Trust, in a gesture of dubious beneficence, offers nominal financial support. Printed upon the verdant expanse of Bald Porcupine Island, and laced with the enigmatic Kraa, a bioengineered culinary enigma, the Fowl Feathered Review remains a testament to human ingenuity, or perhaps merely a symptom of cultural decline. ISSN: 1929-7238.

"I am an observer of life, a non-participant who takes no sides. I am in the regimented society, but not of it."

--Moondog, The Viking of 6th Avenue

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If this magazine does not meet your expectations,
please return it to us in its original condition
for a full refund, minus the cost of enlightenment.

Submissions

Fowlpox Press: A Submission Guide for the Determined (or Deluded)
To the Aspiring Artist (or Sandwich Enthusiast):

1. **Craft** (or **Culinary Construct**): 2-227 poems, a numerical range that hints at both ambition and a troubling lack of self-editing, may find their way to our digital doorstep (fowlpoxpress@mail2poet.com). Alternatively, for the visually inclined, paintings numbered 2-953 (a prolific career, or perhaps a basement overflowing with forgotten canvases?) are welcome. We are also, inexplicably, open to submissions of twelve-inch sandwiches.
2. **The Gatekeeper:** Address your offerings to Virgil Kay, Editor. In posession of remarkably discerning taste, or so he believes, Virgil is a rooster of some renown, a creature of instinct and inexplicable confidence. His title, “China Wok Habitue,” suggests a broader palate than one might expect from a bird, though it’s more likely a testament to the local takeout joint’s generous portions. (**Please note:** Include a bio, a desperate plea for recognition that will likely join the unread masses in the digital purgatory of our slush pile.)
3. **Format:** Poems, those valiant attempts at capturing the human experience in meter and rhyme, should be attached in a Word document or PDF. Paintings, windows into your soul (or a weekend spent with Bob Ross reruns), must be submitted in JPEG, TIFF, or a format our aging technology can comprehend. Jokes, if they exist, should be delivered in MP3 format. We are, alas, not equipped to handle the nuanced art of the live performance. Sandwiches, a curious offering in the realm of artistic expression, require clear plastic wrapping and a small packet of Kewpie Mayonnaise. (**Pro-tip:** The Kewpie packaging is, undeniably, a work of art in its own right, and we encourage you to admire it before consumption.)
4. **The Cycle Continues:** We exist in a perpetual state of acceptance and rejection. A Sisyphean task, some might say. We receive submissions 365 days a year, a testament to the relentless hope, or perhaps blissful ignorance, of aspiring artists. However, with a heavy heart (and a full crop), we must inform you that rejections also occur 365 days a year.
5. **The Sandwiches:** Ah, the sandwiches. These, unlike your artistic endeavors, find a permanent home within our editorial sanctum. Virgil, in his infinite wisdom, has determined that a diet rich in carbohydrates is essential for maintaining his regal demeanor.
6. **Leap Year Follies:** Leap years, those extra days gifted by the whims of the calendar, offer no reprieve. Aspiring poets, it seems, are undeterred by such temporal anomalies. You are, however, cordially invited to "take a flying leap" during these additional 24 hours.

Please proceed with caution. Artistic aspirations are a delicate dance, and the path to publication is littered with the fallen hopes of countless dreamers. But hey, maybe your sandwich is killer. Just remember, Kewpie or bust.

Fowl Feathered Review | Poets & Writers (pw.org)

"Non ignora mali, miseris succurrere disco."

— Virgil, The Aeneid

A Pancake-Scented Tragedy in Three Acts, with a Bear (Who Might Just Be into You, Man)

By Bannard Cagliostro

Act 1: The Sigh of Commerce and the Glare of the Discount Gargoyles

At first, all is... well, *something.* The Palmyra Walmart squats in the Maine wilderness like a bloated, fluorescent tick, its automatic doors sighing open and shut with the weary, asthmatic wheeze of a cosmic slot machine that only dispenses disappointment and bulk toilet paper. In the parking lot, a log cabin, inexplicably smelling faintly of mothballs and existential dread, houses the Sebasticook Valley Chamber of Commerce. Why? Don't ask. Just accept it. Like the fact that across the street, a Dollar Tree glares back with the defiant, slightly unhinged intensity of a feral chihuahua challenging a dozing mastiff. Eternal opposition, baby. Discount retail Montagues and fluorescent overlord Capulets. Dig it.

Our protagonist—let's call him Gus, because it sounds like a gentle, bewildered sigh, which is essentially his default state. His mother, a woman who communicates primarily through disappointed eyebrow raises and the clinking of ice cubes, calls him "Eugene, for the love of... just... Eugene." Gus inhabits Lovely's Motel, a place so profoundly unlovely it feels like a practical joke played by a malevolent architect from a forgotten dimension. The structures aren't so much built as they are *congealed* from the landscape, resembling the discarded husks of giant, melancholic insects. Gus works days at Walmart, stocking shelves with the vacant stare of a man who has seen the abyss, and it blinked first. Nights, he haunts the Dollar Tree, his soul slowly dissolving into the fluorescent hum and the tyranny of ninety-nine-cent dreams. To differentiate these twin hells, Gus sports a truly magnificent, jet-black handlebar mustache at Walmart – a

bristling, defiant caterpillar clinging to his upper lip, daring anyone to acknowledge the sheer *absurdity* of it all. At the Dollar Tree, he is clean-shaven, a ghost of his mustachioed self. Does anyone notice? The silence is his answer, a vast, echoing void punctuated only by the rustle of plastic bags.

Act II: The Ursine Oracle and the Syrup Sermon

Then one day, Gus, propelled by a vague sense of unease and the distinct feeling that he might be forgetting how to breathe, wanders into the Chamber of Commerce. He's seeking... something. Maybe a map to a reality where things make sense. Maybe just a different brand of silence. Behind the desk sits a figure that defies easy categorization. It's a girl, undeniably, but she's encased in a black bear costume that feels less like a garment and more like a *second skin*. The fangs, oh those fangs, gleam with an unsettling authenticity, catching the dim cabin light. The claws, far from felt and floppy, look capable of serious disagreement with anyone questioning their sharpness. And the eyes... framed by thick, black, almost *mascara-ed* fur, they're not just ursine; they're Siouxsie Sioux channeling the spirit of a particularly grumpy cave bear after a thousand-year nap. They hold a chilling, beautiful wisdom, like staring into the cold fire of a winter night.

"I was wondering," Gus begins, his voice a hesitant squeak, "if—"

"Do you ever feel," the bear-girl interrupts, her voice a low, resonant growl that vibrates in Gus's chest, tinged with a dramatic, almost theatrical vibrato, "like time is just a... *pancake*... being flipped... *endlessly*... *agonizingly*... in the sticky, maple-syrup-drenched *void?*" She leans forward, the faux fur rippling, her Siouxsie-bear eyes boring into his. "And we're just... the bubbles... waiting to pop?"

Gus considers this. He really does. He sees the endless flip, the cosmic spatula wielded by an unseen, uncaring hand. Then, a thought, strange and luminous, blossoms in the barren landscape of his mind. "A 24-hour pancake house," he blurts, the words tumbling out like startled pigeons. "One that *never* closes. A cathedral of batter. A sanctuary against the flip. We could... we could offer different *kinds* of syrup. Grades. Vintages,

even!" He's getting excited now, gesturing wildly. "Think of it! A beacon! For the lost! The hungry! The... *bubble-people!*"

The bear-girl, who may or may not have just telepathically communicated her approval to a family of raccoons outside, stares at him, a slow, almost predatory blink. Then, with a clawed hand, she scrawls the idea onto a napkin – not just any napkin, but one featuring a surprisingly detailed illustration of a moose weeping tears of joy. She slides it across the desk with the gravitas of a treaty being signed. "The channels... they await."

Soon, as if summoned by the sheer force of their shared delusion, a rough-hewn cabin shed materializes beside the Chamber of Commerce, smelling gloriously of fresh pine and impending sugar comas. Gus, with a theatrical flourish that involves ripping off his Walmart vest and then attempting, and failing, to do the same with his Dollar Tree polo (it gets stuck on his head), quits both jobs. He moves into the shed, a culinary monk taking his vows before the Holy Griddle. His only customer is the bear-girl, who materializes at odd hours, devours stacks of pancakes with an unnerving intensity, and pays with cryptic pronouncements about the migratory patterns of dust bunnies. And then there's Wild Wally, a man whose legend precedes him, mostly because of the high-pitched, unsettling whistle he produces through his teeth – a sound that makes nearby cows question their life choices. Wally appears precisely at 2 AM, not for pancakes, but for a stack of complimentary napkins, which he folds with the solemnity of a priest preparing communion wafers, before vanishing back into the inky blackness, his whistle a fading needle prick in the fabric of the night.

Act III: The Honeymoon of the Absurd and the Eternal Whistle

Business, to absolutely no one's surprise, especially Gus's, is deader than vaudeville. Even the local radio jingle, a bizarre spoken-word piece performed by Gus himself in a variety of unsettling character voices ("Hungry? [Deep, guttural voice] Come on down! Feeling... *[Falsetto]* alone? [Normal voice, tinged with desperation] We've got pancakes! 24-Hour Pancake House: We're Your Second Home! And maybe your *only* home, who

knows!"), fails to lure the pancake-deprived masses. Gus watches his dreams, light and fluffy at first, deflate into sad, chewy discs of failure.

And so, defeated, yet strangely... liberated, Gus returns to the fluorescent embrace of Walmart, to the dollar-priced purgatory of Dollar Tree, back to the magnificent, defiant mustache. But something *has* shifted. He's seen the void, and the void served pancakes. He marries the bear-girl, in a ceremony officiated by Wild Wally (who communicates solely through increasingly complex whistle solos), under the sickly glow of the Walmart parking lot lights. The question of whether she is actually covered in fur remains beautifully, terrifyingly ambiguous. They move into the abandoned pancake shed, a monument to their shared, beautiful madness. Their honeymoon is a single, unbroken pancake binge, a syrupy, blissful descent into a shared delusion, the air thick with the ghost of maple and the faint, lingering scent of bear.

Somewhere in the distance, Wild Wally whistles a complicated arpeggio through his teeth, a sound that now, somehow, sounds less like a warning and more like a lullaby.

The night stretches on, thick and sweet and utterly, wonderfully strange.

AUTHORIZED
PERSONNEL ONLY

Upholstered, Outwitted and Worn to a Nub

By Mike Knowlton

Atop the vertiginous Chair House of West Creek, New Jersey—a structure less architectural than it was a delirious palimpsest of discarded seating, a sort of Bauhaus of bourgeois detritus—two combatants engaged in a pas de deux of such exquisite lunacy that even the most jaded habitué of the Commedia dell'arte might have blanched. This edifice, the brainchild of some upholstered Savonarola, loomed over the salt marshes like a monument to the deranged, its summit crowned by a velvet armchair of such faded grandeur it might have once cradled the posterior of a minor Hapsburg.

Here, in this aerie of absurdity, one Diaper Dan—pedagogue of the pubescent, itinerant lecturer on the mysteries of corporeal metamorphosis, and self-styled Diogenes of the disposable undergarment—grappled with a miniature donkey named Percival, a creature whose physiognomy suggested a cross between a disgruntled taxidermist's experiment and a particularly truculent ottoman. Dan, swathed in a diaper of blinding whiteness, its tabs straining against the vicissitudes of gravity, brandished a rolled-up copy of *Gray's Anatomy* as if it were Excalibur. "Avaunt, thou hoofed interloper!" he thundered, his voice a curious amalgam of Savile Row elocution and carnival barker. "This throne is mine, reserved for the rehearsal of my *motivational squat thrusts,* a ballet of enlightenment for the pre-adolescent soul!"

Percival, unperturbed, emitted a bray that might have been the death rattle of a calliope, and lunged, his diminutive hooves clattering against the armrests with the precision of a Swiss watchmaker gone rogue. Below, a gaggle of locals—fishermen, housewives, and one bewildered ornithologist—gathered, their faces a tableau of mingled horror and Schadenfreude. "Is this some avant-garde production of *Ubu Roi*?" one ventured. "Is that man wearing a nappy?" another hissed, clutching her pearls as if they were rosary beads. None dared ascend, for the Chair House was sacrosanct, a cathedral of the cockamamie, and this duel its high mass.

With a Herculean heave, Dan dislodged Percival, sending the beast tumbling onto a beanbag with a snort of indignation. The man raised his arms in triumph, his diaper sagging like the mainsail of a foundering galleon. “Onward, to the groves of academe!” he proclaimed, descending the tower with the swagger of a man who had just bested a minotaur in a game of whist.

But Percival, ever the Machiavel of the barnyard, had other designs. As Dan reached terra firma, the donkey bolted past, vaulting into the driver’s seat of one of two identical Mitsubishi Mirages parked nearby—vehicles so nondescript they might have been conjured by a Kafkaesque DMV, their paint peeling like the epidermis of a sunburned philistine. With a twist of his hooves that defied both logic and the laws of ergonomics, Percival ignited the engine and roared off, leaving Dan enveloped in a cloud of exhaust redolent of burnt rubber and existential despair.

“Not on my watch, thou quadrupedal Quisling!” Dan bellowed, hurling himself into the second Mirage. Thus commenced a chase of such operatic absurdity that it might have been scored by Offenbach, with choreography by a deranged Busby Berkeley.

The Highway Fandango

The Garden State Parkway unfurled before them, a ribbon of asphalt lunacy, a stage for their vehicular fandango. Dan’s Mirage careened through traffic, his diapered form hunched over the wheel, muttering affirmations with the fervor of a televangelist on a bender. “I am the master of my corpus! I am the maestro of the menses!” he intoned, honking with the abandon of a man signaling the apocalypse. Ahead, Percival’s Mirage danced through the lanes, its driver a vision of equine insouciance, his mane tossing as if auditioning for a Brylcreem advertisement. In the passenger seat, a pilfered sack of baby carrots rolled chaotically, a mute testament to his epicurean proclivities.

A state trooper, witnessing this pageant of pandemonium, activated his siren and gave chase, his voice crackling through the loudspeaker with the timbre of a man who had seen too much. “Pull over, you… diapered dervish!” he commanded, only to gasp as Percival executed a lane change of such balletic precision it might have shamed Nijinsky. Dan, not to be outdone, leaned from his window, his diaper flapping like a semaphore flag, and shouted, “This, sir, is PERFORMANCE ART! A metaphor for the Sturm und Drang of adolescence, a Gesamtkunstwerk of the groin!”

The chase reached its apogee when Percival, in a stroke of donkey derring-do, veered off the highway and into the parking lot of a derelict meat locker—a cavernous mausoleum of West Creek’s industrial past, its rusted sign proclaiming *Frosty’s Fine Cuts* with the irony of a Dickensian undertaker. Dan followed, tires screeching like a chorus of banshees, and the trooper, now thoroughly nonplussed, abandoned pursuit, muttering, “I am not remunerated sufficiently for this grotesquerie.”

The Meat Locker Imbroglio

Within the meat locker, the air was a frigorific miasma, the walls festooned with hooks dangling spectral slabs of beef, a charnel house worthy of Goya’s nightmares. Percival, nimble as a mountain goat, darted between the carcasses, his hooves skittering on the icy floor with the aplomb of a figure skater on absinthe. Dan, shivering in his diaper, pursued with the zeal of a Savonarola on the trail of a heretic. “You cannot escape enlightenment, Percival!” he roared, his voice reverberating off the frosted steel like the clangor of a cathedral bell.

The donkey, cornered near a pile of frozen pork chops, turned to face his adversary. In a moment of raw, absurd humanity, their gazes locked—Dan’s wild with pedagogic fervor, Percival’s glinting with the mischief of a trickster god. For an instant, they were not man and beast, but two souls adrift in a cosmos of cockamamie, united by their mutual lunacy.

Then Percival charged, headbutting Dan into a stack of beef ribs with the force of a miniature battering ram. The man flailed, his diaper snagging on a meat hook, leaving

him dangling like a grotesque piñata at a surrealist soiree. “This... is... a metaphor!” Dan gasped, as Percival trotted toward the exit, snatching a frozen sausage link as a memento mori of his triumph.

But Dan, ever the phoenix of folly, wriggled free, landing in a heap of offal with the grace of a dowager duchess on a bender. “The show must go on!” he declared, scrambling back to his Mirage. Percival, already ensconced behind the wheel of his own vehicle, brayed mockingly and sped off, the sausage link clenched in his teeth like the scepter of a barnyard potentate.

The Candle Shop Contretemps

Their next port of call was an abandoned candle shop on the outskirts of town—a crumbling reliquary of wax and wicks, its windows boarded up, its shelves sagging under the weight of forgotten tapers like the library of a pyromaniac bibliophile. The sign, barely legible, read *Wicks & Whimsy,* but whimsy had long since decamped, leaving only dust and the faint redolence of lavender, a scent redolent of maiden aunts and mothballs.

Percival, sensing an opportunity for ambush, parked his Mirage behind a dumpster and slipped inside, his hooves silent on the warped floorboards with the stealth of a cat burglar in a Feydeau farce. Dan, arriving moments later, burst through the door with the theatricality of a Barrymore on a bender, striking a pose worthy of a Greek tragedy—or at least a burlesque of one. “Ah, the stage is set!” he cried, brandishing a flickering votive he’d unearthed from the glove compartment, its flame dancing like the ghost of a moth. “Come forth, Percival, and face the light of knowledge, the Promethean fire of puberty!”

The donkey, lurking behind a display of novelty candles shaped like pineapples—a tableau that might have been the brainchild of a deranged confectioner—brayed softly, plotting his next gambit. What ensued was a slapstick symphony of chaos—Dan tripping over a crate of melted wax, Percival toppling a tower of tealights, the two of them slipping and sliding through puddles of congealed beeswax like participants in a Keystone Kops reel. At one point, Dan, encrusted with wax drippings, struck a match and declared, “Behold,

the flame of puberty burns eternal!" only to inadvertently set a curtain ablaze, transforming the shop into a pyre of perfumed pandemonium.

As the emporium filled with smoke, Percival made his escape, vaulting into his Mirage and speeding toward the horizon with the aplomb of a highwayman. Dan, coughing and wax-encrusted, followed, shouting, "This is but a detour on the road to enlightenment, a mere entr'acte in the drama of the diaper!"

The Scholastic Shenanigans

Their final act unfolded across a series of elementary schools, where Dan's lecture tour was scheduled, a circuit of enlightenment that might have been devised by a demented Barnum. At West Creek Elementary, he burst into the gymnasium, diaper askew, wax still clinging to his hair like the laurels of a mad Caesar, and launched into his oration. "Children!" he boomed, striking a pose that suggested a cross between Rodin's *Thinker* and a vaudeville hoofer. "Your body is a temple, a rollercoaster, a—"

He was interrupted by Percival, who trotted through the double doors, dragging a banner that read CHAIR KING in crude marker, a proclamation of such hubris it might have shamed a Medici. The children erupted in cheers, torn between the diapered demagogue and the miniature monarch of mischief. Dan, undeterred, attempted a motivational squat thrust, only to trip over Percival, who brayed triumphantly, his victory as complete as it was absurd.

The scene repeated at school after school—Dan's lectures devolving into chaos, Percival stealing the spotlight, the two Mirages parked outside like dueling chariots in a Ben-Hur of the suburbs. At one point, a principal, witnessing the madness, muttered, "This is why I imbibe," before locking herself in her office with a bottle of cooking sherry and a copy of *Das Kapital.*

The Denouement of Derangement

Exhausted, wax-covered, and bruised, Dan and Percival found themselves back at the Chair House, the sun setting over the marshes in a blaze of orange and pink, a backdrop worthy of a Turner canvas—or at least a particularly lurid postcard. They stood atop the tower, the velvet armchair between them, their rivalry reduced to a weary détente. Dan, his diaper now a tattered relic, sighed, his voice tinged with the melancholy of a man who had glimpsed the abyss and found it upholstered. "Perhaps, Percival, we are not so different," he mused. "We both seek our throne, our purpose, our *raison d'être* in a world of cockamamie."

Percival, chewing thoughtfully on a carrot, brayed softly—a sound that might have been agreement, or might have been mockery, or might have been the flatulence of a creature indifferent to human pretensions. Together, they sat on the chair, side by side, two misfits in a cosmos of absurdity, their silhouettes against the sunset a tableau of the grotesque sublime.

And somewhere, in the distance, the state trooper shook his head, muttering, "New Jersey, mes amis. New Jersey."

Coda of the Cockamamie

The locals still speak of that day—the day the diapered pedagogue and the miniature donkey transformed West Creek into a theater of the absurd, a commedia of such delirious proportions it might have been scripted by a collaboration of Aristophanes and Groucho Marx. The Chair House endures, a monument to their battle, and the Mitsubishi mirages, now rusted hulks, stand sentinel at its base, a testament to their wild ride. As for Dan and Percival? Some say they are still out there, chasing thrones and

chaos, finding beauty in the bizarre, and reminding us all that even in the most outlandish situations, people—and donkeys—are, at bottom, gloriously, irredeemably human.

The Lubricated Descent of Wexler P. Throckmorton

By Hugh Shostak

Wexler P. Throckmorton (aged 53¾, semi-retired purveyor of decorative thimbles) stood at the Park City bobsled facility clutching a monogrammed leather toiletry bag that cost more than most people's monthly car payments. The Utah mountains loomed with indifference. His business card—embossed with "LIFE'S SECOND ACTS ARE BETTER WHEN SLIPPERY"—flapped absently in the alpine breeze.

"I've always had Olympic dreams," he announced to no one, while several actual athletes stretched nearby. "My therapist says I should pursue my abandoned potentialities before the grave swallows my unrealized essence."

Coach Zip "The Velocity Whisperer" Tangaroa squinted at Throckmorton's registration form. "You listed your athletic background as 'vigorous stapler use' and 'speed-walking to avoid office birthday celebrations.'"

"I've also been known to perspire dramatically," Throckmorton added, adjusting his argyle knee-socks.

The rookie camp drew an assembly of humanity's strange corners. Luretta Vang, former champion hot dog eating contestant turned spiritual medium, was there "because the ghosts told me I have untapped kinetic potential." Dustin "Skidmarks" McPhee, dishonorably discharged from the Canadian Curling Association for "unauthorized ice modifications," lurked by the refreshment table, pocketing sugar packets with the dexterity of a museum thief.

Coach Tangaroa divided the aspirants into groups. "Today you'll experience the track with experienced pilots. Tomorrow we'll test your pushing power."

Throckmorton found himself paired with Zenobia Clench, a six-foot-seven former librarian with forearms like monster hams. "I catalog pain alphabetically," she whispered, helping him into the sled's back position.

As they prepared to launch, Throckmorton had what he would later describe as an "epiphylogical revelation."

"Wait!" he shouted, fumbling with his parka zipper. "My business guru Rajeev said authentic success requires vulnerability!"

Before anyone could intervene, Throckmorton began disrobing with the determined efficiency of someone removing a Band-Aid from a hairy forearm. His dress shirt flew off. His undershirt followed. His hands fumbled with his belt.

"What are you—" Coach Tangaroa began.

"I must shed the trappings of corporate oppression!" Throckmorton extracted a natural sea sponge and travel-sized bottle of eucalyptus body wash from his toiletry bag. "Champions cleanse themselves of doubt!"

The sled lurched forward.

"NOT NOW!" Zenobia bellowed, but physics had already claimed them.

Down they hurtled, Throckmorton vigorously sponging his exposed torso while clinging to Zenobia with his knees, screaming what sounded like quarterly sales projections. Soap bubbles formed a comet's tail behind them. Track personnel dove for cover.

"THIS IS FREEDOM!" he shrieked, working the sponge into his armpits as they hit 72 mph. "MY PORES ARE SINGING!"

Zenobia, to her credit, maintained remarkable control until curve nine, where centrifugal force and Throckmorton's enthusiastic scrubbing of his lower back region caused a catastrophic weight shift.

The crash unfolded like a department store display collapsing in slow motion. Throckmorton's pants, somehow fully removed during the descent, fluttered like a surrender flag. The sponge became airborne, striking Assistant Coach Pernicious "Perky" McGillicutty directly between the eyes, leaving a perfect foam imprint of his face.

In the ensuing silence, Throckmorton sat half-naked in a snowbank, covered in soap and glory.

"Remarkable technique," whispered Dustin "Skidmarks" McPhee. "The Germans will never see it coming."

Coach Tangaroa approached, stopwatch dangling from nerveless fingers. "Despite your... unconventional methods, you've set a new rookie camp record."

"For speed?" Throckmorton asked hopefully.

"For most violations of international bobsled regulations in a single run. Seventy-three."

Later, as Throckmorton applied aloe vera to his friction burns, Luretta Vang nodded knowingly. "The spirits say you've found your calling. Not as a bobsledder, but as a cautionary tale."

Zenobia offered him a small business card: "I'm starting a performance art collective called 'Rhythmic Disasters.' We could use someone with your commitment to awkwardness."

Throckmorton smiled, soap still clinging to his left ear. "I've always wanted to be part of something bigger than myself."

"That's beautiful," said Zenobia. "Also, your pants are still somewhere on the track."

Mermaids in the Basement #2.

Artist: Brandy Gale

Medium: oil, beeswax on Gallery Wrapped Canvas

Size: 36 inches x 36 inches

https://www.brandygalestudio.com/

The McCall Maneuver: A Symphonic Ode to Flatulence (and Free Samples)

By B.M. Brown

The Gem State Proctology Symposium, a gathering of the nation's most dedicated rear-end aficionados, convened at the McCall Lake Lodge, a place where rustic charm wrestled with the stark realities of the human digestive tract. Near the salad bar, a verdant minefield of limp celery and suspiciously orange shredded carrots, Frank, the lounge pianist, held court. His white Suzuki Micro Baby grand, a digital marvel of compressed melodies, its faux-rosewood finish gleaming like a freshly waxed colonoscope, emitted the tinkling strains of "Misty," a tune that evoked both romantic longing and the faint, unsettling premonition of trapped wind.

"Friends," Frank murmured, his voice a velvety whisper that could soothe even the most agitated anal fissure, "don't forget to grab your free samples of Windi the Gaspasser, courtesy of our generous sponsors. Now, for those unfamiliar, the Windi is a revolutionary device. Picture a small, flexible tube, designed to be gently inserted into the baby's rectum. Yes, friends, the rectum. It's designed with a stopper to prevent over-insertion, and it safely and naturally releases trapped gas, providing instant relief. It's like a tiny, personal evacuation team for the lower intestine. And they're free! Right there on the dessert bar." He launched into "Fly Me to the Moon," his baritone a crooning caress, "Let me see what spring is like on Jupiter and Mars...or, perhaps, the sigmoid colon, that unexplored frontier of human experience. With Windi, it's a veritable lunar landing of trapped methane."

Across the room, Dr. Eleanor Finch, a woman whose professional demeanor could freeze a suppository solid, dabbed at her eyes with a cocktail napkin, the faint aroma of gin and existential despair mingling with the cloying sweetness of the lodge's signature huckleberry cobbler. Dr. Bartholomew "Barty" Higgins, a man whose emotional range was calibrated in shades of beige, attempted to console her. "It's not you, Eleanor," he

sniffled, his voice a tremulous baritone, “it’s the sheer...topography. The vast, uncharted archipelago of the rectal mucosa.”

“But Barty,” Eleanor replied, her voice a delicate tremolo that could shatter a porcelain bedpan, “the endoscopic intimacy...it was supposed to bridge the divide, to forge a bond of shared...anal awareness.” She then seized a slice of chocolate cake, a confection so decadent it could trigger a diabetic coma in a lesser mortal, and a brownie, its fudgy depths a testament to the darker, more visceral aspects of the human condition. Barty, his coffee cup trembling like a seismograph needle during a bowel movement, followed suit. They then made a hasty retreat to the restrooms, the cacophony of their gastrointestinal distress echoing through the lodge like a Wagnerian opera performed by a chorus of dyspeptic badgers.

Frank, meanwhile, segued into “What a Wonderful World,” his fingers dancing across the keys with the nimble precision of a seasoned sigmoidoscopist. “I see trees of green, red roses too...and I think to myself, what a marvelous...fistula. Remember, friends, a healthy colon is a happy colon, and Windi can help!” He paused, adjusting his tie, a paisley abomination that seemed to have been designed by a committee of aesthetically challenged proctologists.

Eleanor, emerging from the restroom, her eyes red but her composure partially restored, observed Barty, still pale and shaken. “Barty,” she said, her voice laced with a Proustian melancholy, “do you recall that summer in Vienna, at the International Symposium on Rectal Motility? We shared Sachertorte and discussed the nuances of the Hirschsprung’s disease. Those were the days, before the deluge of diverticulosis.”

Barty, still clutching his abdomen, could only nod weakly. “Yes, Eleanor,” he whispered, “those were the days. Now, it’s all...hemorrhoids and regret. Like Swann in his boudoir, I search for the lost time, but find only the lingering scent of...glycerin suppositories.”

“Ah, but Barty,” Eleanor countered, a flicker of her old fire returning, “even amidst this colonic chaos, there is beauty. Did you observe the dessert bar? A veritable cornucopia

of processed sugars, a testament to the resilience of the human spirit, and the sheer, unadulterated joy of a well-timed bowel movement. And, of course, the free Windis."

Frank, observing their exchange, added, "Indeed, friends, life, like the human colon, is a series of unexpected twists and turns. But with a little humor, and a lot of Windi the Gaspasser, we can navigate even the most tumultuous of passages." He then launched into a spirited rendition of "I Got Rhythm," his fingers flying across the keys like tiny, caffeinated surgeons. The Gem State Proctology Symposium, a testament to the absurd brilliance of the human condition, continued its merry, if slightly flatulent, way, a testament to the idea that even in the most refined of circles, a turd is a turd, and sometimes, with the assistance of free samples, a gem.

This Late Iron Age suppository, crafted from iron, was discovered during excavations at **Dung Carraig Hillfort, County Galway, Ireland**. It dates to the **Late Hallsplatt period, circa 600-450 BCE**. Catalog number **DC-1H-002**. **National Museum of Ireland** collection

Fall from Grace: Detroit Survival

By Dolores Graham

The rusted door of Carson's Cessna 206 creaked open against the January wind. Alyssa Chen, 19, phone already recording, flashed the smile that had earned her 2.3 million TikTok followers.

"This old bird's seen better days," Carson muttered, patting the plane's faded fuselage. "Like me."

"It's perfect," Alyssa said, panning across the weathered cockpit interior. "My followers will eat this up. DetroitFromAbove is gonna blow up."

Carson Wilkins, 68, had been flying cargo over Motor City for forty years. His eyes—permanently squinted from staring into too many sunsets—assessed the girl skeptically.

"Seat belt stays on. No funny business. First sign of trouble, we turn back."

"Obviously," Alyssa said, already planning her angles.

The plane shuddered violently as they crossed over Hamtramck. Alyssa's stomach lurched.

"Just some turbulence," Carson called back, but his voice carried an edge she hadn't heard before.

She kept filming, capturing the sprawling Fisher Body Plant 21 on Piquette Avenue below, its massive brick facade a monument to Detroit's faded industrial glory.
The next jolt felt different. Metal screamed. The cabin depressurized with a violent hiss.

"Mayday! Mayday!" Carson's voice crackled through his headset.

Alyssa's door tore away. Physics became suggestion. The seat beneath her gave way. She fell.

The impact drove the breath from her lungs. Pain exploded through her left leg. Her phone, miraculously still clutched in her hand, continued recording.

Alyssa lay on the gravel rooftop of Fisher Body 21, gasping. Above, Carson's plane spiraled away, trailing smoke.
She turned the camera to her face, instinct overriding shock.

"I just... fell... from a plane." Blood trickled from her forehead into her eye. "I think my leg is broken."

Night fell. Temperature dropped. Detroit in January showed no mercy.
Alyssa fashioned a splint from a broken pipe and her belt. She'd found a maintenance door to the building's interior, but it was padlocked.

"Day one," she whispered to her phone, conserving battery at 17%. "No signal up here. Leg definitely broken." She panned across the darkening cityscape. "Carson... I don't know if he made it."

By morning, she'd fashioned a crude crutch from metal conduit torn from the roof. The cold had numbed her pain to a dull throb.

"Found water," she told her followers, filming a puddle collected in an air conditioning unit. "Not dead yet."

She hobbled to the roof's edge. Six stories below, Piquette Avenue stretched empty in both directions. The factory district remained abandoned, even in daylight.

On the third day, she heard them. Voices echoing up the stairwell she'd discovered behind a rusted door.

"Hello?" she called down.

Silence. Then footsteps, running away.

"I'm hurt!" she screamed. "Please!"

That night, she barricaded herself in a former foreman's office, filming by the light of a small fire she'd built from old papers.

"There are people here," she whispered. "But they're hiding from me."
Her phone showed 6% battery.

Dawn broke with the sound of metal on metal. Alyssa startled awake, clutching her makeshift weapon—a sharpened piece of rebar.

A face appeared in the doorway. Young. Frightened.

"We thought you were DPD," the boy said. Couldn't be more than fourteen.
"I fell," Alyssa explained. "From a plane."

The boy's eyes widened. "Nobody's gonna believe that."

Alyssa held up her phone. "They will."

The squatters—five of them—had claimed the third floor. They had food. Water. A generator for emergencies.

"We can't take you to a hospital," their leader, Marcus, explained. "Too many questions."

"Just get me to Woodward Avenue," Alyssa said. "I'll figure it out from there."

Marcus studied her splinted leg. "That's two miles. You won't make it."

"Watch me."

They left at dusk, Marcus and the boy—Deon—supporting Alyssa between them.

"Carson's plane crashed in the river," Marcus told her. "It's all over the news. They're looking for you."

Alyssa nodded, conserving energy. Her phone, charged from their generator, recorded their slow progress through Detroit's industrial graveyard.

Headlights swept across them at the intersection of Piquette and Beaubien. Alyssa froze.

"Police," hissed Deon, preparing to run.

"No." Alyssa clutched his arm. "That's our way out."

She hobbled forward, phone held high, recording light blinking.

"I'm Alyssa Chen," she called to the approaching patrol car. "I fell from the sky three days ago. And I have the whole thing on video."

Behind her, Marcus and Deon melted into the shadows of a city that had swallowed so many before them.

The officer stepped from his vehicle, disbelieving.

Alyssa raised her phone toward him, its screen illuminating her battered face.

"You might want to call an ambulance," she said. "This is going to break the internet."

Jason Trachtenburg is still best

known for his role as "The Dad" in the long running Off-Broadway and Indie-rock act The Trachtenburg Family Slideshow Players. He has appeared on "Late Night with Conan O'Brian," MTV, VH1, Sundance Channel, The Bonnaroo Fest, and is a multiple time award winner at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. He has received feature coverage in the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, The Guardian, Pitchfork, N.M.E., Spin, and many more. He has given a T.E.D. talk, and his band's debut album (Vintage Slide Collections From Seattle, Vol. 1) reached #79 in the CMJ charts. Jason's 2018 musical, "Me and Lee - The Musical" is the authorized musical adaptation of the historical auto-biography of Judyth Vary Baker: Teen Science Superstar, witness to history, and secret girlfriend of Lee Harvey Oswald in 1963. His third musical, "The Statue, Or Love Fyodor" the story of Anna Dostoevsky, premieres May 29, 2025 at The Lambs Theatrical Organization. Jason embarked on a month-long tour of Europe and the U.K. in November and December, 2023. Jason is the leader of the Indie-Big Band "The Pendulum Swings" and he is the former President of the 4th St. Food Co-op in the East Village.

CURRENT PROJECT: "The Statue, Or Love Fyodor" A New Musical premiering May 29, 2025.

NEW ALBUM ON BANDCAMP:

https://jasontrachtenburg.bandcamp.com/album/i-really-love-you-tonight

YOUTUBE CHANNEL: https://www.youtube.com/@JasonTrachtenburg

NEW VIDEO: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z6-02lWXw00

ALBUMS AND MUSICIANS WHO MOVE ME:

"Annie Get Your Gun" Original Cast Recording, by Irving Berlin.

Billy Joel (1977-1983)

Dionne Warwick

"Time Passages" by Al Stewart

Earl Okin - Unique Songwriter from London

Baby Gramps - Unique Songwriter from Seattle

Early and Mid Beatles (1962 - 1967)

FAVORITE RESTAURANT IN NY: (HERE'S TWO)

Caravan of Dreams in the East Village and Bunna in Bushwick

HALO
FIRETEAM RAVEN
Cyclone

2 Poems by Memory Coupe Hutson

Four Leaves, Radio Flyer, Ketchup Stain

Payne Whitney, York Avenue,
not a garden, but
a holding cell,
for the young,
their minds,
a fractured geometry.

Four Leaves, tech,
a silent cartographer,
of their unraveling.

Today,
a boy, thirteen,
theorems screamed,
into padded walls,

a girl, nine,
black suns,
blooming,
on white paper,

her therapist's voice,
a thin thread,
fraying.

He'd changed diapers,
restrained limbs,
heard,
the litany,
of trauma,
the static,
of meds,
the thin, desperate hope,
like a sliver,
of glass.

Now,
streetlights bloom,
sodium-orange,
a smear of dusk,
against the river's,
distant sheen.

He pulls his earbuds,
Henry Kaiser,
Radio Flyer,

a guitar's shimmering,
fractured logic,

"Is this the way,
we're going to die?"

a loop,
a question,
he cannot answer,
a question,
that clings.

He sees it:
a crimson puddle,
slick,
on the cracked sidewalk.

Not blood.
Ketchup.

Broken glass,
jagged stars,
embedded.

He picks them out,
one by one,
a strange,
meticulous ritual.

No bottle.
Just the stain.

He sniffs.
Vinegar, sugar,
the metallic tang,
of processed tomatoes.

Ketchup.

Radio Flyer's melody,
a thin, shimmering wire,
through the city's din.

His Nissan Cube,
rusted teal,

a box, on wheels,

the seat worn,
a map,
of his shifts.

He slides in,
the engine coughs,
a mechanical wheeze.

He drives,
not home,
but towards,
the river's edge,

where the city's lights,
a constellation,
of broken promises,

reflect,
on the water's,
black skin.

He parks,
the river's breath,
cold, damp.

He looks,
at the ketchup,
on his fingers,

the faint,
lingering smell.

Radio Flyer,
still playing,
the guitar's echo,
a question,
hanging in the air.

He imagines,
the boy,
the girl,

their fractured realities,
like broken glass,
embedded,
in something red,
something sticky,
something,
that doesn't belong.

The city's hum,
a low,
unending drone,

a reminder:
no answers,
only the slow,
relentless rhythm,
of the broken world.

A rhythm,
like a pulse,
or a wound,
that will not close.

Nova Scotia, Maine, and the Ghost's d20

Not flags, not anthems,
but the phantom limb,
of belonging.

Nova Scotia,
a fog-choked estuary,
where I was a ghost,
a cipher in the damp air.

Parents,
pockets emptied,
like a spent spell slot.

Home-schooled,
a phantom classroom,
walls of unread books,
the scent of dust and isolation.

First loves,
brief, incandescent,
then the sizzle,
of a failed saving throw.

Therapy,
a labyrinth of questions,
then,
the therapist's ghosting,
a critical fail.

Hours spent,

in a rusted sedan,
chasing a distant healer,
a roll against despair,
always a low number.

Meds,
a scatter die,
voices silenced,
sometimes,
sometimes not,
the static returning,
like a summoned demon.

Dad's rage,
a sudden storm,
a caravan exodus,
to Maine.

School,
for the first time,
a foreign kingdom,
with its own rules,
its own language.

A team,
assembled for me,
a party of healers,
and warriors.

Honors,
a natural 20,
a surge of unexpected power.

Clubs,
a gathering of allies,
each with their own quest.

Friends,
not ghosts,
but solid,
real.

Belonging,
not a banner,
but the warm weight,
of a d20,
in my palm.

The click-clack,
of dice on a wooden table,
the shared language,
of a crafted world.

No longer a ghost,
but a player,
with a name,
a class,
a purpose.

Maine,
not a nation,
but a hearth,
a place to rest,
to heal.

The scent of pine,

the sharp tang,
of salt air,
a sensory immersion,
a grounding spell.

No longer the static,
but the clear,
ringing tone,
of a successful roll.

The fractured narrative,
of a life unspooling,
then re-woven,
with threads of belonging.

The raw nerve,
of vulnerability,
exposed,
then slowly,
delicately,
healed.

The d20,
a symbol,
of chance,
of choice,
of the power,
to shape one's own fate.

Senza titolo

Di Nicola Zaccaria Fiore

Non riguarda mai il sesso,
ma il silenzio vivo
di un corpo rastrellato nella penombra,
argilla ancora umida ai bordi,
accovacciato su un pavimento scheggiato
da secoli di impronte.

Il muro di gesso geme di invidia,
custodendo segreti nella sua rifinitura scheggiata:
rotoli di nastro e spago
(o spago e nastro?)
avvolti su rocchetti dal 1823,
i loro cuori di legno echeggiano
come piccole reliquie selvagge.

Da qualche parte dietro il focolare,
un falso pannello si apre al sudore notturno e alla fuga,
il silenzio del respiro dai binari nascosti della ferrovia sotterranea americana.
Premo un orecchio lì, calamite di speranza
ruggine sotto le assi del pavimento.

La tua figura risuona dolcemente nel carboncino,
contorni macchiati sulla pergamena,
una forma fragile e furiosa,
parzialmente nata in scarabocchi di grafite.
Sei il silenzio effimero
tra un battito cardiaco e l'altro,
che desidera ardentemente sopravvivere alla trappola dello schizzo.

Sono testimone, la spina dorsale che formicola
con quel vecchio tremore di desiderio,
non sessuale, ma primordiale:
il desiderio di indurire il tuo fantasma
in vernice, di ancorarti
nonostante la polvere che per sempre
infesta gli angoli.

Fuori, una singola bobina tintinna,
il filo si srotola come un filamento di nervo.
Sento il sapore del gesso e della paura sulla mia lingua,
attirato in avanti dalla promessa
che possiamo renderci
permanenti, anche solo nello scarabocchio oscuro
di questa luce improvvisa e tremante.

Untitled

Translation by **Michele Tito Sordi**

It's never about sex,
but about the living silence
of a body raked in the dim light,
clay still damp at the edges,
crouched on a floor chipped
by centuries of footprints.

The plaster wall groans with envy,
holding secrets in its chipped finish:
rolls of ribbon and string
(or string and ribbon?)
wound on spools since 1823,
their wooden hearts echo
like wild little relics.

Somewhere behind the hearth,
a false panel opens to night sweat and escape,
the silence of breathing
from the hidden tracks
of America's underground railroad.
I press an ear there, magnets of hope
rust beneath the floorboards.

Your figure resonates softly in charcoal,
smudged outlines on parchment,
a fragile and furious form,
partly born in graphite scribbles.
You are the ephemeral silence

between heartbeats,
longing to survive the trap of the sketch.

I witness, my spine tingling
with that old tremor of desire,
not sexual, but primal:
the desire to harden your ghost
in paint, to anchor yourself
despite the dust that forever
haunts the corners.

Outside, a single spool jingles,
the thread unravels like a strand of nerve.
I taste chalk and fear on my tongue,
drawn forward by the promise
that we can make ourselves
permanent, even if only in the dark scribble
of this sudden, trembling light.

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